

## MONUMENTS TO COLD WAR: Mount Charleston, test site likely spots

Congress approves \$300,000 to study memorial potential

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The propeller of an Air Force C-54 transport plane lies near the trail as hikers make their way up to the site near the Mount Charleston summit where the plane crashed in 1955, killing all 14 men on board. The blades were retrieved during the Silent Heroes of the Cold War National Memorial Expedition in August 2001.  
REVIEW-JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

**WASHINGTON** -- Legislation to expand the nation's historic landmarks by adding sites significant to the Cold War era got a boost in Congress this week.

The Senate approved a bill late Monday to begin cataloging potential historic locations, including the Nevada Test Site and Mount Charleston outside Las Vegas, where a 1955 plane crash was covered up for more than 40 years.

Sponsored by Sens. John Ensign, R-Nev., and Harry Reid, D-Nev., the bill authorizes a \$300,000, three-year Interior Department study. After that, the department would recommend sites to be added to the national park system as historic landmarks.

The House has yet to take action on an identical bill sponsored by Rep. Joel Hefley, R-Colo.

Only five of more than 2,300 national historic landmarks relate to the Cold War, according to National Park Service administration director Sue Masica.

Bill proponents say new national historic sites will educate the public as memories of the Cold War fade from the national consciousness and new generations grow up without the threat of imminent nuclear attack.

"Lasting 50 years, the Cold War cost thousands of lives, trillions of dollars, changed the course of history and left America the only superpower in the world," Reid said when the bill was introduced in February.

Among Nevada locations expected to be cataloged are the test site, where researchers exploded nuclear weapons in the arms race with the Soviet Union, and Mount Charleston, where 14 men were killed in an air crash that the government kept secret until recently.

On Nov. 17, 1955, everyone aboard died when a C-54 transport plane crashed into Mount Charleston during a blizzard. The aircraft was carrying CIA agents and U-2 spy plane designers believed to have been headed to Area 51, the once-secret military installation near Groom Lake.

Bent propellers and other pieces of charred aircraft still remain on the treeless alpine slope.

The incident came to light after Steve Ririe, a Las Vegas insurance broker and history buff, began researching the disaster and promoting the site for a memorial to those who died. He has been credited as an impetus behind the Cold War memorial bill.

"The Cold War era is a crucial one in America's history," Ensign said when the bill was submitted. "Educating our children about it is a very noble and important undertaking."

Other sites suggested for consideration are the command center at Cheyenne Mountain, Colo., and silos in the Midwest that held nuclear-tipped missiles aimed at the Soviet Union.

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